



**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**FILED**

04/05/22

04:59 PM

**A2204002**

Application of The Ponderosa Telephone Co.  
(U 1014 C) and Ms. Kristann Silkwood  
Mattes for approval of transfer of control  
pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section  
854(a).

A. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION OF  
THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO. (U 1014 C)  
AND  
MS. KRISTANN SILKWOOD MATTES  
FOR APPROVAL OF TRANSFER OF CONTROL PURSUANT TO  
PUBLIC UTILITIES CODE SECTION 854(a)**

Kristann Silkwood Mattes  
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Attorneys for  
The Ponderosa Telephone Co.

April 5, 2022

## **I. INTRODUCTION.**

Pursuant to Section 854(a) of the California Public Utilities Code and the California Public Utilities Commission's ("Commission") Rules of Practice and Procedure ("Rules") 2.1 and 3.6, The Ponderosa Telephone Co. (U 1014 C) ("Ponderosa") and Ms. Kristann Silkwood Mattes ("Ms. Mattes") (collectively, "Applicants") request authority for Ms. Mattes to acquire control of Ponderosa following the death of Ponderosa's longstanding ultimate owner, Ms. Elizabeth Luanne Silkwood ("Ms. Silkwood") on December 22, 2021. Ponderosa informed the Commission's Communications Division of Ms. Silkwood's death in January 2022, and this Application is being submitted as soon as feasible thereafter to confirm Commission approval for the involuntary transfer of control effectuated by this event, in accordance with Ponderosa's succession plans and Ms. Silkwood's testamentary directives.

The transfer of control to Ms. Mattes is in the public interest and satisfies the Commission's approval standards under Public Utilities Code Section 854(a). Ms. Mattes is Ms. Silkwood's daughter and Ponderosa's current President. Upon resolution of Ms. Silkwood's estate and the distribution of assets held in trust, Ms. Mattes will become the controlling shareholder of Ponderosa Communications, Inc. ("PCI"), of which Ponderosa is a wholly-owned subsidiary. Approval of this Application will allow for continuity of leadership for Ponderosa and provide a stable ongoing managerial platform through which Ponderosa can continue to bring high-quality, reliable telecommunications to the rural communities that it serves.

## **II. STANDARD OF REVIEW.**

The transfer of control addressed through this Application is subject to the straightforward "public interest" standard under Public Utilities Code Section 854(a). Neither Public Utilities Code Section 854(b) nor Section 854(c) applies to this involuntary transfer because Ponderosa has far less than \$500,000,000 in "gross annual California revenues." Pub. Util. Code §§ 854(b), 854(c); *see* D.17-11-013 at 4 (authorizing approximately \$10.9 million in annual intrastate revenues for Ponderosa in Test Year 2018). In applying Section 854(a), the Commission considers whether the transaction will be "not adverse to" and "consistent with" the "public interest." *See* D.21-11-006 (Ducor) at 11 (COL 2); D.20-03-021 at 6, 14 (Hunter Communications, Inc.); D.20-08-008 at 5 (Zenith Energy); D.11-05-030 (Central Valley Gas Storage) at 4; D.07-05-031 at 3 (California-American Water).

Although Section 854(a) generally requires the Commission's approval prior to the transfer of control of a public utility subject to its jurisdiction, the Commission has also recognized that prior approval is impossible in circumstances where the transfer occurs as the result of the death of an owner of a closely-held utility. *See, e.g.*, D.00-10-016 (Pinnacles) at 3-4. The Commission's role under these circumstances ". . . should be a ministerial one in passing to and affording the beneficiary substantially the same rights and privileges as were held by the predecessor." *Id.* at 5; *see also* D.15-05-014 (Pinnacles); D.13-10-011 (Ducor) at 6; D.02-09-009 (Foresthill) at 3.

### **III. PERTINENT BACKGROUND FACTS.**

Upon her death in December 2021, Ms. Silkwood owned a controlling 61.81% interest in PCI, the parent corporation of Ponderosa, giving her a controlling interest in Ponderosa in the same percentage.<sup>1</sup> Ms. Silkwood's indirect control of Ponderosa was comprised of a combination of direct personal ownership of shares in PCI, her status as trustee of various trusts holding interests in PCI, and her membership in an entity that owns shares in PCI. The composition of her controlling interest is displayed in the chart provided as Exhibit A hereto.

Ms. Silkwood's death triggered a probate administration of her estate<sup>2</sup> and necessitates administration of various trusts created by, or for the benefit of, Ms. Silkwood (collectively, the "Trusts"). Ms. Mattes is both the executor of Ms. Silkwood's estate and trustee or co-trustee of the Trusts. Once the estate and Trusts have been fully administered and their assets distributed, Ms. Mattes will own, either directly or indirectly in trust, a controlling interest in PCI. Due to elections yet to be made in the administration of the Trusts, Ms. Mattes' actual voting control over shares of stock in PCI will range from a low of 58.99% to a high of 66.79%; *in all scenarios* after administration of Ms. Silkwood's estate and Trusts, Ms. Mattes will hold more than a 50% voting control in PCI. Ms. Mattes' acquisition of this controlling interest in PCI will necessarily result in her indirect control over Ponderosa, which remains a wholly-owned subsidiary of PCI.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1996, the Commission approved a plan of reorganization that permitted Ponderosa to become a wholly-owned subsidiary of PCI in D.96-07-025 (July 3, 1996), 66 CPUC.2d 776. Ms. Silkwood held voting control in PCI from the time that it became the direct holding company of Ponderosa until her death. Ms. Mattes will represent the fourth generation of the founding Bigelow family to own Ponderosa (Ms. Silkwood represented the third generation), which has been a telephone corporation in California since 1908.

<sup>2</sup> The probate administration of the Estate of Elizabeth Luanne Silkwood is currently pending in Madera County Superior Court, Case No. MPR014707; Ms. Mattes was appointed executor with full authority under the Independent Administration of Estates Act by the Court on March 8, 2022, and Letters Testamentary were issued on March 14, 2022.

#### **IV. THE PROPOSED TRANSFER OF CONTROL IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.**

The public interest will be served by the approval of this Application. Ms. Mattes has been a Member of Ponderosa's Board of Directors since 1995, its President since 2014, and its Vice President from 1995 to 2014. Because the leadership of Ponderosa will continue in the family and Ms. Mattes has been an officer and director of the utility since 1995, the change in ownership control described herein will not adversely affect Ponderosa's operations. Further, the transfer of control described herein will not result in any changes to Ponderosa's rates, tariffs, or service quality. Accordingly, the Commission can be assured that the change in control in Ponderosa caused by Ms. Mattes' acquisition of a controlling interest in PCI, the parent company of Ponderosa, will not adversely affect its ability to meet its public utility obligations. In fact, by promoting the stability of the utility's management, the authority requested in this Application will advance the public interest. Approval of this transfer will also fulfill Ms. Silkwood's wishes that her interests continue in the family, consistent with the Commission's objective of "affording the beneficiary" of an involuntary transfer "the same rights and privileges as were held by the predecessor," consistent with the public interest. *See* D.02-09-009 (Foresthill) at 3.

#### **V. FORMAL REQUIREMENTS.**

In support of this Application and in compliance with the Commission's rules, Ponderosa and Ms. Mattes submit the following information:

##### **A. Name and Address of Applicants (Rule 2.1(a)).**

**1. Ms. Kristann Silkwood Mattes:** Ms. Mattes's full legal name is Ms. Kristann Silkwood Mattes. Her business address is The Ponderosa Telephone Co., 47034 Road 201, O'Neals, CA 93645. Her business telephone number is: (559) 868-6000.

**2. The Ponderosa Telephone Co.:** Ponderosa is a corporation organized under the laws of California. Its business address is The Ponderosa Telephone Company, 47034 Road 201, O'Neals, CA 93645. Its business telephone number is: (559) 868-6000.

**B. Correspondence and/or Communications (Rule 2.1(b)).** Communications and correspondence regarding this Application should be addressed to:

Kristann Silkwood Mattes  
The Ponderosa Telephone Co.  
47034 Road 201  
O'Neals, CA 93645  
Telephone: (559) 868-6000  
Email: kristi@ponderosatel.com

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BRB Law LLP  
436 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1205  
Oakland, CA 94612  
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Email: sean@brblawgroup.com

**D. Articles of Incorporation (Rule 2.2).** Certified copies of Ponderosa's Articles of Incorporation and all amendments thereto were attached as exhibits to Application No. 15-09-005. In accordance with Rule 2.2, specific reference is made to this prior filing in lieu of their submission with this Application.

**E. Description of the Authorization Sought (Rule 2.1).** The Applicants seek authority from the Commission, pursuant to Public Utilities Code Section 854(a), to permit Ms. Mattes to acquire indirect control of Ponderosa through the acquisition of control of PCI, Ponderosa's parent company, based on the testamentary intent of Ponderosa's deceased prior owner, Ms. Silkwood.

**F. Character of Business Performed and the Territory Served by Each Applicant; Financial Information (Rule 3.6(a), (e)).**

**1. The Ponderosa Telephone Co.:** Ponderosa is a small rural telephone company and incumbent local exchange carrier, which owns and operates a telephone system in portions of Madera, Fresno, and San Bernardino Counties. Ponderosa furnishes local exchange, access, and related services. Its property consists principally of telephone facilities, including central office equipment, aerial and buried cable, land, and buildings. As of year-end 2021, Ponderosa served approximately 7,637 basic telephone access lines. A balance sheet for Ponderosa as of the latest available date (December 31, 2021) is attached hereto as Exhibit B (because Ponderosa's annual report through December 31, 2021 was also filed with the Commission on April 1, 2022, there is no need to include an income statement pursuant to Rule 3.6(e) given that the date of the balance sheet and the annual report are the same).

**2. Ms. Kristann Silkwood Mattes:** Ms. Mattes is the President of Ponderosa. As demonstrated by her educational and professional background as described in Exhibit C attached hereto, she has ample qualifications and experience to serve as the individual exercising control over Ponderosa.

**G. California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Compliance Rule 2.4:** The transfer of control of Ponderosa does not qualify as a "project" as to which approval under CEQA is required. No authority for any construction is requested in connection with this Application. Therefore, there is no reasonable possibility that there will be significant effect on the environment relating to this proceeding. Accordingly, this Application is categorically exempt from review under CEQA. *See* Cal. Code Regs., Title 14 § 15061(b)(3).

**H. Categorization, Issues to be Considered, and Proposed Schedule (Rule 2.1(c)):**

Applicants propose that the Commission categorize this Application as a ratesetting proceeding. The ratesetting category is proposed because this proceeding does not qualify as an adjudicatory or quasi-legislative proceeding under the Commission's rules. Accordingly, it should be categorized as ratesetting even though it will not affect rates. (*See* Rule 7.1(e)(2) of Practice and Procedure before the Commission.)

The sole issue to be considered is whether the Commission should approve the transfer of control of Ponderosa described in this Application. The issue should be evaluated according to the public interest standard in Public Utilities Code Section 854(a).

The Applicants believe that no hearings are required, anticipate no opposition, and propose the following schedule, which will resolve this proceeding expeditiously:

April 5, 2022	Application Filed
April 11, 2022	Application Appears in CPUC Daily Calendar
May 11, 2022	Protests or Responses Due
May 23, 2022	Responses to Protests or Responses, if necessary
May 31, 2022	Pre-Hearing Conference
June 8, 2022	Scoping Memo
July 1, 2022	Proposed Decision Granting Application
August 4, 2022	Decision Granting Application

**VI. ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURES REGARDING APPLICANTS.**

Pursuant to D.13-05-035, a series of specific disclosures are required for “[t]elephone corporations seeking or transferring a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.” D.13-05-035 at 59 (OP 14). While Applicants are not seeking such relief, and instead are seeking approval for an involuntary transfer of control of a utility, they nevertheless make the following disclosures out of an abundance of caution.

In a Commission proceeding well known to the Commission relating to the dissolution of the Rural Telephone Bank (“RTB”), Ponderosa was penalized \$221,649 in connection with an application that the Commission found was misleading and thus in violation of Rule 1.1 of the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure. *See* D.19-12-041 at 93 (confirming amount of penalty). Ponderosa contested the penalty through the Commission’s process and continues to

disagree with the Commission's findings, but it nevertheless discloses the existence of this penalty based on the ultimate conclusion of the Commission's proceeding.

Furthermore, aside from the one noted and disputed penalty, neither Applicants, any of their affiliates, officers, directors, partners, agents, or owners (directly or indirectly) of more than 10% of Ponderosa, or anyone acting in a management capacity for Ponderosa has:

- (1) held one of these positions with a company that filed for bankruptcy; or
- (2) been personally found liable, or held one of these positions with a company that has been found liable, for fraud, dishonesty, failure to disclose, or misrepresentations to consumers or others; or
- (3) been convicted of a felony; or
- (4) been (to his/her/their knowledge) the subject of a criminal referral by judge or public agency; or
- (5) had a telecommunications license or operating authority denied, suspended, revoked, or limited in any jurisdiction; or
- (6) personally entered into a settlement, or held one of these positions with a company that has entered into settlement of criminal or civil claims involving violations of Sections 17000 *et seq.*, 17200 *et seq.*, or 17500 *et seq.* of the California Business & Professions Code, or of any other statute, regulation, or decisional law relating to fraud, dishonesty, failure to disclose, or misrepresentations to consumers or others; or
- (7) been found to have violated any statute, law, or rule pertaining to public utilities or other regulated industries; or
- (8) entered into any settlement agreements or made any voluntary payments or agreed to any other type of monetary forfeitures in resolution of any action by any regulatory body, agency, or the California Attorney General.

## **VII. CONCLUSION.**

Based on the foregoing, Applicants request that the Commission issue an order at the earliest possible time:

1. Authorizing Ms. Kristann Silkwood Mattes to acquire control of The Ponderosa Telephone Co. as described in this Application;
2. Granting such other relief as may be necessary and proper.

Respectfully submitted this 5<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2022.<sup>3</sup>

By: /s/ Sean P. Beatty

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Attorneys for  
The Ponderosa Telephone Co.

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<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to Rule 1.8(d), counsel for Ponderosa is authorized to sign this Application on behalf of all Applicants.



## VERIFICATION

I, Kristann Silkwood Mattes, am an officer of The Ponderosa Telephone Co. employed as its President, and I am authorized to make this verification on behalf of The Ponderosa Telephone Co. I also make this verification on behalf of myself as an individual applicant. I have read the foregoing Application, and I know the contents thereof, from my own knowledge and/or from discussing its contents with other knowledgeable employees and/or representatives of The Ponderosa Telephone Co. The matters stated therein are true of my own knowledge or I am informed and believe that they are true, and on that basis, I allege that the matters stated therein are true.

Executed this 5th day of April, 2022 in O'Neals, California.

  
Kristann Silkwood Mattes

**EXHIBIT A**

**COMPOSITION OF MS. SILKWOOD'S CONTROLLING INTEREST IN PONDEROSA  
COMMUNICATIONS, INC.**

**Ponderosa Communications, Inc.  
ELS Voting Interest Prior to Death**

	<b>SHAREHOLDERS</b>	<b>PREFERRED STOCK</b>	<b>COMMON STOCK</b>	<b>VOTING %</b>
1.	E.L. Silkwood	25,138	0	29.44%
2.	Silkwood Ventures, LLC		2,393	2.80%
3.	Else B. Bigelow-Jesse E. Bigelow Trust date March 12, 1987 Beneficiary: E.L. Silkwood Trustee: E.L. Silkwood	13,422	0	15.72%
4.	Jesse E. Bigelow Residual Trust Beneficiary: E.L. Silkwood Trustees: E.L. Silkwood, James F. Wagner	5,163	0	6.05%
5.	Robert L. Silkwood Testamentary Trust fbo Lee Roy Silkwood (Income Beneficiary: E.L. Silkwood) Trustee: E.L. Silkwood	2,999	330	3.90%
6.	Robert L. Silkwood Testamentary Trust fbo Kristi Silkwood Mattes (Income Beneficiary: E.L. Silkwood) Trustee: E.L. Silkwood	2,999	330	3.90%
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>49,721</b>	<b>3,053</b>	<b>61.81%</b>

**EXHIBIT B**

**PONDEROSA BALANCE SHEET**

THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO.  
SUMMARY FINANCIALS  
BALANCE SHEET  
December 31, 2021  
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ASSETS	BALANCE
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<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	13,117,944.93
A/R Telecommunications	814,130.32
A/R-CASF Grant Funds Receivable	687,397.19
A/R Other	134,435.14
A/R USAC, ULTS & CTF Support	79,694.04
A/R Access	1,427,797.77
Materials and Supplies	841,552.72
A/R Intercompany	1,803,087.42
Prepays	611,166.39
	-----
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	19,517,205.92
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<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
Non-Regulated Investments	166,400.00
Marketable Securities Held t	0.00
Investments in Non-Affiliated Companies	10,897,101.65
Unamortized Debt Issuance	61,332.77
Other Deferred Charges	35,129.16
	-----
NON-CURRENT ASSETS	11,159,963.58
	-----
<b>PLANT, PROPERTY &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>	
Telephone Plant Under Construction	6,053,915.25
	-----
General Support Assets	17,798,741.45
Central Office & Transmission	36,099,565.23
Cable & Wire Facilities	91,729,050.38
	-----
PLANT IN SERVICE	145,627,357.06
	-----
GROSS PROPERTY, PLANT & EQUIPMENT	151,681,272.31
	-----
<b>ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION</b>	
General Support Assets	(15,518,913.66)
Central Office & Transmission	(35,232,420.76)
Cable & Wire Facilities	(71,777,824.07)
	-----
ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION	(122,529,158.49)
	-----
NET TELECOM PLANT IN SERVICE	23,098,198.57
	-----
NET PROPERTY, PLANT & EQUIPMENT	29,152,113.82
	-----
Non-Operating Plant	80,777.30
A/D Non-Operating Property	(68,919.86)
	-----
NET PLANT	29,163,971.26
	-----
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>59,841,140.76</b>
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THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO.  
SUMMARY FINANCIALS  
BALANCE SHEET - continued  
December 31, 2021  
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LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	BALANCE
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<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	
A/P Invoices	516,763.70
A/P Sick & Vacation	987,288.92
A/P Other	503,282.04
A/P Interexchange Carrier	1,716.54
A/P NECA	177,900.00
A/P Taxes & Surcharges	53,357.70
A/P Payroll Withholdings	9,876.61
A/P Intercompany	1,063,898.77
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SUBTOTAL - ACCOUNTS PAYABLE	3,314,084.28
Advance Billing & Payments	247,617.66
Customer Deposits	11,706.61
Current Maturities	2,186,242.14
Accrued Taxes	2,201,220.08
Current Deferred Income Taxes	(109,284.00)
Unmatured Interest	(52.35)
Other Current Liabilities	644,907.28
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TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	8,496,441.70
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<b>OTHER LIABILITIES &amp; DEFERRED CREDITS</b>	
Long Term Debt - RUS	4,347,266.52
Non-Current Deferred Operating Inc Tax	(376,609.70)
Non-Current Deferred Non-Op Inc Tax	434,260.53
Other Deferred Credits	334,883.00
	-----
TOTAL OTHER LIABS. & DEFERRED CREDITS	4,739,800.35
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<b>STOCKHOLDER'S EQUITY</b>	
Capital Stock Outstanding	853,780.00
Retained Earnings	41,547,053.14
Unrealized Gain/Loss on Investment	11,689.61
Current Net Income	4,192,375.96
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TOTAL EQUITY	46,604,898.71
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>59,841,140.76</b>
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## **EXHIBIT C**

### **EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF MS. MATTES**

# **KRISTANN SILKWOOD MATTES**

## **PRESIDENT**

### **THE PONDEROSA TELEPHONE CO.**

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#### **Contact**

Address: 47034 Road 201  
O'Neals, California 93645

Telephone: (559) 868-6000

Email: kristi@ponderosatel.com

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#### **Professional Summary**

Passionate and accomplished business and educational professional with 25+ years of telecommunications and 40+ years teaching and agricultural service organization experience. Proven track record in strategic planning, oversight of tactical execution, leadership development, and shareholder engagement at diversified family-owned and professionally managed telecommunications company. Successful agricultural science educator and leader in global agricultural service organization.

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#### **Professional Telecom Experience**

2014 to Present – President and Board Member, The Ponderosa Telephone Co. (PTC). Responsible for setting strategic direction of PCI's wholly-owned rate of return, regulated local telephone corporation to ensure success of its core mission of providing reliable, high quality voice services within its large, rural service territory. Meet regularly with senior staff to navigate regulatory environment impacting PTC; involved with Company's General Manager and other key staff in all regulatory matters, such as General Rate Case, public safety, emergency services, and other issues before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and/or Federal Communications Commission (FCC); decision-maker with Board



of Directors on all Company business decisions, including but not limited to capital investment, human resources, and compensation and benefits matters; particular passion for promoting leadership development and equal employment opportunities for all Company staff, including exempt, skilled and entry level positions, to drive quality workforce in the rural communities served by PTC.

2014 to Present – President and Board Member, Ponderosa Communications, Inc. (PCI). Responsible for setting strategic direction of this diversified family-owned, multi-generational telecom, real estate and investment company, including its affiliated companies; consult and interface with professional senior managers of the Company's departments to ensure tactical execution of strategic goals; drive leadership development among senior staff and employees to ensure quality management remains consistent over time. Approve of and manage Company's non-telecom investments in real estate development, self-storage, senior living, and private equity projects to diversify Company's revenue streams.

2014 to Present – President and Board Member – Ponderosa Cablevision, Inc. (PCV). Responsible for setting strategic direction of PCV, PCI's wholly-owned unregulated provider of broadband, internet, and long distance products. Establish Company focus on maintaining, improving, and extending advanced telecom services which are vital to bridging the digital divide in PCV's rural market locations. Approve of new services, including Mesh-WiFi and Network Management products to PCV's suite of services to assist customers to efficiently manage their broadband and internet connections. Monitor all CPUC and FCC regulatory proposals which impact PCV's products and services.

1995 to 2014 – Vice-President and Board Member – PCI, PTC, and PCV. Served under Presidency of Elizabeth Luanne Silkwood as corporate officer and Board Member; attended all monthly regular Board meetings and all special meetings as necessary. Briefed on and participated in all business matters and decisions of PCI, PTC, and PCV.

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## **Professional Education Experience**

### 2007 to Present – Minarets High School, O’Neals, California.

Agricultural Science teacher and Chairwoman of the Agricultural Department. In addition to classroom duties, founded, developed, and chaired Agricultural Department with emphasis in Ag Science, Animal Science, Ag Mechanics, and Ag Business. Instituted Supervised Agricultural Experience and Ag Systems Management programs which provide an interdisciplinary approach for high school students. Founded Minarets High’s Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter, California’s fastest growing high school FFA program; served as FFA Advisor to students involved in school’s FFA Chapter, developing numerous regional, state, and national champions, the most recent in 2019.

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### 1990 to 2007 – Central High School, Fresno, California.

Agricultural Science teacher and Chairwoman of the Agricultural Department. Served as FFA Advisor to students involved in school’s FFA Chapter .

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### 1985 to 1990 – Tomales High School, Tomales, California.

Agricultural Science teacher. Served as FFA Advisor to students involved in school’s FFA Chapter.

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### 1979 to 1985 – Clovis High School, Clovis, California.

Agricultural Science teacher. Served as FFA Advisor to students involved in school’s FFA Chapter.

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### 1977 to 1979 – Redwood High School, Visalia, California.

Agricultural Science teacher. Served as FFA Advisor to students involved in school’s FFA Chapter.

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## **Professional Organization Experience**

1970 to Present – Future Farmers of America (FFA). Lifetime member of local, California, and National FFA organizations, both as a student and FFA teacher advisor. FFA is a global organization devoted to premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Current Board Member of the California FFA and former Chairwoman of the California FFA Foundation.

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## **Professional Awards**

1973 – American FFA Degree Recipient. First female student recipient of the National FFA's highest degree. Awarded to student who shows outstanding leadership ability, community involvement, commitment to his or her local and state chapters, and who have "gone above and beyond" to achieve excellence.

1993 – California Ag Teacher's Association, Teacher of Excellence Award, San Joaquin Region. Scored Award recognizing winner's excellence in instructional program, community involvement, and professional and student activities in each of the State's six regions.

1996 – Honorary American FFA Degree Recipient. National FFA award to teachers who have created high-quality agricultural education programs to inspire students to success, and who have provided exceptional service on a national level to agriculture or agricultural education.

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## **Community Involvement**

Ponderosa Communications, Inc. and Silkwood Family Foundation. PCI, the Silkwood Family Foundation, a non-profit organization established by Elizabeth Luanne Silkwood, and the Bigelow, Silkwood, and Mattes families, have a long history of community and charitable involvement which continues to this day. Recent examples include a large donation to Chawanakee Unified School District to enable it to construct a state-of-the art single purpose Agricultural Center at Minarets High School; a new mobile communications trailer for use by

local law enforcement and safety-oriented agencies in emergency situations, such as local wildfires, and for use by local schools to introduce students to telecom technology; financial assistance for low-income families during the COVID Pandemic; and on-going grants through the Silkwood Family Foundation to assist deserving students with the expenses of FFA-related travel.

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## **Education**

1976 – California State University Fresno. Awarded Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Economics.

1977 – California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Received Single Subject Specialist Credential – Agriculture.